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THE MORALE CLIMATE OF THE CREW (FROM OBSERVATIONS OF A SUBMARINE DOCTOR)

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16. Abstract <p>The article examines personnel interrelationships as affected by sociopsychological compatibility. Practical examples are cited. The principle of complementary temperaments is explored. Stress is laid upon the need for creating conditions that will permit personnel to deal with compatibility problems during the pre-voyage preparation period and especially during the confining conditions of a long voyage.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ORIGINAL PAGE IS OF POOR QUALITY</p>			
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THE MORALE CLIMATE OF THE CREW (FROM OBSERVATIONS OF A SUBMARINE DOCTOR)

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What should be the interaction of crew members on a long voyage? Conventional /35* standards (regulations, instructions, morale prescriptions, etc.) provide that people living in close quarters should respect each other, observe the rules of subordination and show each other mutual consideration. Usually this is what happens. However it is not always true that individual military personnel show themselves well-intentioned in dealing with each other.

From numerous observations of the conduct of Navy personnel under oceanic conditions it may be asserted, that conflict situations which sometimes arise usually occur during periods of emotional stress. These conditions are governed by both internal and external causes. Among the former one may mention difficulties encountered in military service, unpleasant factors in the living environment, the length of a self-contained voyage, etc. Among the internal causes that induce a negative emotional background we may mention various illnesses as well as overeating, immoderate use of highly spiced foods and coffee. All of these factors cause the human organism to relinquish its previous stable state and an excessive amount of energy is required to restore and maintain the equilibrium.

Emotional stress usually develops during the preparatory period preceding a cruise, during the time of adaptation to conditions of increased stress (first weeks of the voyage, rapid change of climatic zones, the execution of complicated combat drills, etc.) as well as toward the end of a long voyage (until the news is announced that the vessel is returning to base). It so happens that there is an inverse proportion between emotional stress and crew solidarity. The closeness of people is a reflection of their number. The larger it is, the harder it is to get the crew together. These points, along with others, must constantly be kept in mind by the commander.

* Numbers in the margin indicate pagination in the foreign text.

During the independent part of the voyage the interrelationships of the sailors do not change appreciably and are largely determined by the degree to which they adapt to each other even up to the moment when they set out to sea. However, the attitude of the group toward individual members of the crew undergoes changes during that period. For some their authority is reinforced, whereas for others it may diminish. This depends upon their knowledge, their ability to cope with a difficult situation, their sense of community and their education.

One notes a number of negative points in the behavior of individual officers: heightened irritability toward the end of the voyage, an unhealthy reaction towards remarks or jokes, a lack of control in discussions, etc. The causes are these: long separation from one's native shores and family, homesickness for wife or children, a sense of responsibility for executing this or that task, the monotony of the ship's interior and the constant narrow circle of communication.

A penetrating analysis of the causes cited and of others as well as rational consideration of these causes in a concrete situation help the commander to unite the crew, to create a healthy morale climate and to mobilize the staff in solving important problems. Very significant too is the fine personal example of the commander, his human qualities and his ability to educate.

I recall the days when I was sailing on a submarine commanded by A. Klochko, Captain Second Grade. Everyone knows that a torpedo attack is a very tense moment, the apogee of "battle". How subordinates conduct themselves at that moment is largely dependent upon the commander. Realizing this, the captain maintained his calm and his sense of humor even in a difficult situation. His orders, given in an even tone, were carried out with a certain enthusiasm and his well-timed humorous remarks reduced psychological tension. The men did their work with ease and enthusiasm, as the medics say "hanging loose". And as a rule the attacks were successful, the submarine crew "put out", using all their resources and strength to achieve success. Good /36 feelings toward the commander played an important role in the execution of any tasks.

Group togetherness and consequently the morale climate of the ship's crew are greatly affected by such factors as the service position of its members, their rank, length of service on the ship and differences in age, tastes and habits. Getting people together is especially promoted by conditions based on the principle of com-

plementary character. It has been noted, for example, that officers, identical in temperament, are at times under stress in their mutual relationships. When judged by mutual sympathy, psychological incompatibility likewise has been noted between artistic and thinking types, between the empathetic (extremely responsive, sympathetic, unselfish) and the non-empathetic, strong willed and weak willed, etc.

If they care about unifying the ship's crew and further improving its morale climate, the commander, the political representative, the Party activist and the Komsomol activist must not lose sight of the new crew members. This point must be kept in mind. For example, if an officer or midshipman is transferred from one crew to another, he actually must reassert his authority, and this fact may have an adverse effect on his subsequent activity in the service. This often happens as a result of a change in psychological compatibility on the part of a new member of a crew. Thus, for example, A. Skubiyev, an officer who was very conscientious, knew his specialty well and enjoyed the respect and confidence of the crew, lost confidence in himself when transferred to another crew. The basic reason was psychological incompatibility with some officers.

The same phenomenon may be noted when there is an exchange of commanders. The following is an example. On one ship the section (BCh-3) of Senior Lieutenant I. Bardyushko was an excellent one. But when another commander was put in charge of the crew, this combat unit began to lose positions it had gained. The principal reason was psychological incompatibility between the commander of the ship and the commander of the BCh-3 unit. Chiefly at fault was Bardyushko himself, who had thrown away the "reins of command" in respect to his unit. Part of the blame likewise falls on the new ship's commander, who did not know how to approach the subordinate officer. The previous commander, knowing that Bardyushko lacked initiative, always kept a check on him and, by his wise counsels and directions, animated and activated the young officer in a manner of speaking. All this was done without any feelings being hurt and with tact. We may say that in this case "psychological compatibility" was reinforced in the approach, as appeared later. It would be wrong to say that the new commander did not pay any attention at all to Bardyushko. He likewise tried to influence him but acted without taking into account the special character qualities of the Second Lieutenant. At first he chatted with him and pointed out to him his wrong moves. But at the very moment when a few more short steps would have established contact, the commander of the ship grew tired of re-

straint, lost patience and resorted to more decisive measures: disciplinary penalties. The commander of the BCh03 unit gave up.

Usually transferred officers know a great deal about their specialty, are conscientious, work hard and are strong willed and optimistic. Those who are not "enrolled" in the group exhibit a low degree of special knowledge, are not conscientious, are weak willed and pessimistic, are very indifferent toward their fellow workers, etc. P. Burakov, for example, was an officer in the latter category. His style of leadership favored shouting, skeptical remarks and at times even undesirable conduct in respect to his subordinates. He felt that, since he was in charge, he was always right, and it never crossed his mind to reflect on what kind of feelings lingered in the mind of a subordinate after contact with such behavior. Influenced by his example, the individual young lieutenants adopted a poor manner of dealing with their subordinates. Through a "chain reaction" this hauteur communicated itself to the senior officers. As a result the combat unit at times exhibited elements of unsociability, mistrust and lack of confidence. The senior officers attempted to correct the situation but in the end the extreme measure had to be taken and the officer removed from duty. Yet it took some time to completely get rid of the results of the conflicts set on foot while he was in charge. /37

This of course is a single case, an example of the so-called expenditure involved in appointing a person to a post without sufficient thought. On the whole, however, ships' commanders and all officers try to maintain a very positive mood among combat personnel, they aim at strengthening the group. As many studies have shown, the results of military and political preparation are better in those crews, where there is closer rapport between officers and between enlisted men.

In the formation and strengthening of the morale climate of a crew on shipboard we may recognize the following directions: psychological selection of compatible persons; implementation of organizational methods, that have a positive influence on the psychological condition of crew members (development of formal relationships, disciplinary practice, self development, organization of leisure); implementation of measures that improve the general living environment.

In view of the extreme difficulty of accounting for all factors that affect the interrelationship of sailors, it might be possible to set up optimal parameters from

a psychological point of view for ship's crews on the basis of the most practical criteria. These might include, for example, temperament, the artistic and thinking types of higher neural activity, etc. Thus, keeping in mind the incompatibility of choleric temperaments and melancholy, of sanguine and phlegmatic, one might be able to set up pairs of temperaments that do not conflict. In this process, in order to optimize interactions, increase rapport and work capacity for the entire group, one must keep in mind the compatibility of the senior officers with the rest of the crew members. Success of the project likewise makes it desirable to take these principles into account when appointing senior officers and unit commanders.

Of course, it is not entirely possible to rely on only the psychological characteristics of persons. However, inasmuch as people are fairly conservative, and the feelings of sympathy or antipathy generated within them are rather tenacious, these factors must be taken into account. The sociopsychological characteristics of persons undergo considerable changes and therefore emphasis should not be put upon selection and matching but upon the creation of conditions that turn these factors in the right direction by the use of politicoideological and moral education, self improvement and study.

Among the organizational measures that improve the morale climate on shipboard we might suggest: planning and execution of tasks with the command staff on the basis of social psychology; the most complete possible information given to crew members in all matters important to them; proper arrangement of cadres; well-timed psychological acclimatization of personnel assigned to a voyage by early inclusion in the chain of command during the pre-voyage period; well organized active leisure; well-timed offer of shore leave; a good choice of musical programs, books, relaxing games and movies. Thus, one would highly recommend during the voyage the showing of multiple camera films and standard films that deal with adventure or with detective stories and comedies, preferably in color, that minister to people's emotional hunger and need for color.

If one wishes to set up stable positive emotions, it is important to keep all living quarters spotlessly clean. The way the living and service quarters are painted should promote the best possible moods. The sense of physical vigor is promoted by physical exercises, wiping one's skin with cold water, forced breathing, light massage, the use of tea or coffee, etc.

The effect of the living environment on one's emotional condition is affected by a whole series of external factors which improve one's mood. Among these we may mention: the high or low temperature of the ambient air, high or low humidity, loud noise, vibration, insufficient or excessive illumination, improper ventilation of rooms, unbalanced diet, improper water control, cramped space, etc. All of these factors induce physiological displacements in the organism accompanied by negative emo-38tions. To combat these factors by improvement of technical systems of survival is to fight at the same time for the improvement of the psychological climate.

...Man's internal world is complicated and variegated. At times every "I" is a riddle. And when a group contains quite a few such "I's", the solution is not easy. It is sometimes difficult for the commander, the political representative, the Party activist and the Komsomol activist during the first period to find a "common language" with these officers, non-commissioned officers and sailors, who arrive on board immediately before the voyage and with whom the inconveniences of long trips must be shared. At this point perhaps the following suggestion might be in place. Why not have the medical psychologist include in an officer's personal dossier his professional opinion on the man's character? In the course of the future lieutenant's training period in an Academy a good deal can be found out about his psychological characteristics and typological peculiarities. The doctor's opinion would help those who set up the cadres to make very appropriate assignments. An accurate description of the officer at that level furnishes precious assistance to the commanding staff in forming the crew that is about to go on a long voyage.

Similar records would be desirable for the files on graduates of schools for midshipmen and ensigns, senior technicians and also sailors who are finishing their training period. This idea is new and entails inconvenience but we feel it will bring results.

In conclusion it should be said that the problems touched upon in this article deal only with some aspects of the formation and evaluation of the morale climate on shipboard. Its principal purpose is to direct the attention of physicians and commanding officers to the existence of the problem and to encourage them to analyze and take into account the many different kinds of factors affecting psychological compatibility in the crew, particularly on long voyages.

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